

## HOUSEKEEPING MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND STANDARDS OF SELECTED HOTELS AND RESTAURANTS OF ILOCOS SUR, PHILIPPINES

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### ABSTRACT

*The standards of hotel and restaurant services encourage tourists and investors to stay in the country. This research assessed the housekeeping management practices and standards of hotels in Ilocos Sur in terms of cleanliness, orderliness, sanitation and safety, facilities/equipment, materials control and effective maintenance and the problems encountered in the housekeeping department. A validated researcher-made questionnaire was used to gather the data triangulated by interview and ocular inspection. Weighted means, frequency distribution, percentage and rank were used to analyze the data gathered. Housekeeping management practices were rated "very good." Cleanliness was rated "outstanding" while all the other standards were rated "very good." Problems affecting the housekeeping department of the hotels and restaurants were evaluated as "slightly serious." Hotels in Ilocos Sur are clean, safe, secure, and comfortable but some lack modern equipment and facilities. They subscribe to standards set by PD 856 and other regulations. Hotels are encouraged to recruit appropriately trained workforce and orientation and re-orientation must be part of their housekeeping management programs. Hotels must continue to upgrade their facilities to meet the demand of the fast changing technologies and taste of customers in this highly competitive world.*

**KEYWORDS:** Housekeeping, Management Practices, Management Standards, Hotels, Restaurants, Business Management

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### INTRODUCTION

One objective of the ASEAN Integration is to create a single market and production base by ensuring a free flow of goods, services, investment, capital and skilled labor. While it is expected to level the playing field among industries in the region, it is also expected that Philippine firms should brace for an intense competition with their ASEAN counterparts. Hotel and Restaurant services are critical factors affecting the tourism industry. The standards of their services encourage tourists and investors to stay in the country. Housekeeping management determines the services that these provide to guests.

The Regional Activity Center for Cleaner Production prescribes the following good housekeeping practices for the housekeeping department of Hotels (RAC-CP, 2006): 1) Use the appropriate amount of water for cleaning tasks, 2) Advise maintenance if installations are not working properly, 3) Avoid the most aggressive products and choose products with a neutral pH, which are biodegradable or have a low phosphate content. Avoid aerosols.; 4) Use the correct amount of cleaning products, 5) Follow washing machine programs, only using them when they are full and with cold water whenever possible, 6) Do not dispose of pollutant products down the drain, 7) Ensure that there is environmental information material available for clients in the rooms, 8) Place waste bins in strategic places such as on beaches and paths that belong to the hotel, 9) Place waste separation bins in rooms and

kitchens, 10) Store somewhere clean and secure duly separated waste until it is collected by the municipality, 11) When waste has been separated by guests, it should be placed in the corresponding bag in the trolley, and Keep hazardous products in safe places, following the safety sheet for their correct use.

Mackenzie (1969) as cited by Jones (2005) divides the manager's functions into five areas – planning, organizing, staffing, directing, and controlling. The management plan involves seven basic activities: forecasting, setting objectives, developing strategies, programming, budgeting, setting procedures and developing policies. Organizing involves four activities: establishing an organizational structure, delineating relationships, creating position descriptions, and establishing position qualifications. Staffing requires four activities: selecting employees, orienting employees, training, and developing workers. Directing involves delegating, motivating, coordinating, managing differences, and managing change while controlling operations include: establishing a reporting system, developing performance standards, measuring results, taking corrective actions, and rewarding.

A management function includes planning, organizing, directing and controlling (Zimmerer, 1997). These are separate functions, but they must be handled competently if a business undertaking is to achieve its goals.

Based on the above concepts, it was theorized that the management practices and housekeeping standards of the hotels in Ilocos Sur determines the quality of services that these offer to guests. Thus, this research was conducted.

### Objectives of the Study

Generally, the research aimed to determine the status of housekeeping management of the hotels in Ilocos Sur. Specifically, the research answered the following questions:

- What is the status of housekeeping management practices in the hotels in Ilocos Sur;
- What is the level of housekeeping standards of Hotels in Ilocos Sur in terms of Cleanliness, Orderliness, Sanitation and Safety, Facilities/equipment, Materials control and effective maintenance?;
- What are the problems encountered in the implementation of housekeeping practices in the Hotels in Ilocos Sur? and
- What activities could be proposed to improve the housekeeping management practices of hotels in Ilocos Sur?

### METHODOLOGY

The descriptive-evaluative type of research was used to determine the status of the housekeeping management operations as well as the housekeeping standards of the hotels subjected for study. The researcher also employed documentary analysis and personal interview to supplement data that were gathered by the written tools.

Eleven Hotels and Restaurants were included in this study and distributed as follows two (2) in Candon, one (1) in Santiago, one (1) in Narvacan, one (1) in Caoayan, one (1) in Sta. Maria and five (5) in Vigan City. Ten (10) hotel executives (hotel managers, owner or assistants), forty (40) housekeeping supervisors, one hundred (100) housekeeping attendants or utilities served as respondents.

The data was gathered using a questionnaire checklist and was supplemented through documentary analysis and interview. The draft of the questionnaire was face validated by five housekeeping instructors from 3 colleges of Ilocos Sur offering the BSHRM course. The final form was pilot-tested to 2 housekeeping supervisors and 3 housekeeping attendants of Sea and Sky Hotel and Restaurant in San Fernando City who were not included as subjects for study. The reliability was determined using the Cronbach's alpha technique or the *Kuder-Richardson (KR20) coefficient* and had a high reliability index. All the data gathered were analyzed using the frequency counts, percentage, weighted means and ranks.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Housekeeping Management Practices of Hotels

The housekeeping management practices of hotels and restaurants in Ilocos Sur is “very good” with a rating mean of 3.98 (Table 1). Planning appears to be the least valued practice while controlling is the most valued management practice. This supports the claim of Jones (2005) that some managers overlook the significance of planning in the discharge of their functions.

**Table 1: Summary Table on the Housekeeping Management Practices of  
Hotels and Restaurants in Ilocos Sur**

Management Practices	Managers/ Supervisors (N=40)	Attendants (N=100)	Mean	Descriptive Rating
Planning	3.98	3.81	3.87	Very Good
Organizing	3.85	3.93	3.90	Very Good
Directing	3.88	3.95	3.93	Very Good
Controlling	4.20	4.06	4.11	Very Good
Evaluation	4.32	3.98	4.08	Very Good
<b>MEAN</b>	<b>4.05</b>	<b>3.95</b>	<b>3.98</b>	<b>Very Good</b>

**Legend:** 4.21-5.00 Outstanding; 3.41-4.20 Very Good; 2.61-3.40 Good; 1.81-2.60 Fair; 1.0 - 1.8 Poor

Further, managers/supervisors gave a higher rating mean to the management practices (4.05) than the staff/attendants (3.95). Both however were described as “very good.” This could be explained by the fact that the management practices are concerns of the management, thus it is expected that management/supervisors can give higher ratings for themselves.

### Housekeeping Standards of Hotels and Restaurants

#### Cleanliness

Hotels in Ilocos Sur are outstandingly clean. This is revealed in through the perceptions of the respondents and as indicated by the over-all rating mean of 4.26. Standards in housekeeping that were regularly subscribed and rated outstanding are the following: All areas are immaculately clean, corner to corner, top to bottom including surfaces; Closets, cabinets and storage areas are also kept clean; Furniture and fixtures are properly dusted, doorknobs and metal fixtures are polished with the right polishing chemicals; Floors are vacuumed, polished and shampooed when necessary; and Grounds are free of litter and dirt. The only standard rated as “very good” was Windows and glass panels are dusted and polished. Both groups of respondents have the same perceptions on the standards.

#### Orderliness

The housekeeping standards in terms of orderliness were rated “outstanding” by the managers/supervisors group while the staffs/attendants rated these as “very good.” Both groups evaluated the standard “Facilities and fixtures are

properly arranged and installed in appropriate locations" as "outstanding" while all the other standards were rated as "very good." These include Room amenities are properly installed in appropriate location; Linens are neatly folded; and Beds are made up properly, linen is mitered and wrinkles free. Again, managers and supervisors rated the standards higher (Outstanding) than the attendants/staff (very good).

### **Sanitation and Safety**

The health and safety of guests and house occupants is a moral responsibility of any hospitality establishment (Roldan & Crespo, 2003). The above claim was given a considerable attention by the housekeeping management and staff of hotels in Ilocos Sur as evidenced by the over-all rating mean of 4.06 (very good). One standard that was rated "outstanding" by both groups of respondents was "The rooms, function rooms and public areas are free from any safety hazards like open electrical outlets, dangling wires, damaged tiles, slippery floors, broken chairs, etc."

The standards that were observed to be very good include: The whole area is free from all sources of bacterial contamination such as undisposed garbage and leftover, stagnant water, etc.; Glasses and water jug that are installed in guestrooms are covered; Trained roving guards are available to check movements in guestrooms to ensure the protection of guests; Safety instructions during emergencies are available in all rooms; All items for personal use of guests and which come in contact with the body like linen, cutlery, glasses, etc. are sanitized with sanitizing detergents to protect guests from possible bacterial contamination; Wet garbage is properly underlined with plastic, covered and disposed regularly; Area is protected from pest infestation, regularly fumigated to eliminate pests; Building is provided with all required safety facilities like ventilated fire exits, emergency alarms, fire extinguishers, luminous safety signs, etc.; Safety standards prescribed by the government are strictly enforced; The hotel is prepared for any emergency, has well-organized safety or emergency procedures, including the use of safety equipment; and All staff are trained on emergency procedures, including the use of safety equipment. The managers and supervisors gave higher ratings than the staff/ attendants. This reveals the lack of confidence on the part of the staff as a result of the least rated standard on the training of all staff on emergency procedures. Dialogues with staff brought out the fact that some of the attendants in the hotels under study did not undergo trainings for emergencies.

### **Facilities and Equipment**

The attainment of a conducive and homey environment for guests is affected by the maintenance and conditions of facilities and equipment. The result of the study shows that hotels and restaurants in Ilocos Sur are convenient places to stay as indicated by the overall rating mean of 4.08 described as "very good" on the standards on facilities and equipment. Hotel attendants are very keen in the observance of the standard: Guests are not disturbed by noise and other forms of distractions. This was the only standard that obtained an outstanding rating. The other standards that were rated very good were: There are sufficient amenities for the comfort of guests like linen, toiletries, drinking glass, etc.; Suitable interior design is provided for; there is proper blending of colors; Ambiance is soothing to the eyes, not dim or dull; Rooms are properly ventilated and lighted; No eyesore can be found in guest contact areas; and Wall decors and TV sets are posted at eye level. The above finding implies that hotels in Ilocos Sur are striving to make their hotels "a home away from home" for their guests.

### **Guest Relations**

The housekeeping standards of hotels and restaurants in Ilocos Sur in terms of guest relations obtained an over-all rating of 4.11, described as “very good.” This indicates that staffs exhibit warm disposition, attends to guests needs and complaints. This further means that the hotels and restaurants in Ilocos Sur are very good in terms of building relations with guests.

There were three standards rated as “outstanding” and were as follows: Guestrooms are free of safety hazards; Staffs go out of their way to render extra service to guests; and Customer feedback is solicited to determine guests’ satisfaction. The standards rated “very good” were: Guests’ requests and concerns are given prompt and proper attention; Staffs exhibit warm and pleasant disposition in dealing with guests; Tact and diplomacy are observed when dealing with complaints and difficult situations; Customer feedback and concerns are logged down and discussed for corrective actions during meetings; Customer needs and concerns are anticipated and attended to immediately; Staffs express warm appreciation and gratitude for guests’ patronage; Inquiries of guests are given accurate and appropriate responses; Guests with special problems like the sick, the intoxicated, etc. are given the necessary assistance and support by the housekeeping staff; Guest complaints are handled smoothly and corrective actions are taken immediately; Guest rooms are furnished with the necessary amenities and supplies; and Cleanliness and orderliness in the guestrooms are maintained.

### **Materials Control and Preventive Maintenance**

It is the responsibility of every housekeeping manager or supervisor to see to it that all housekeeping supplies are used sparingly and reasonably, that they are protected from theft or pilferages and that every consumption is accounted for (Roldan & Crespo, 2003). The housekeeping standards in terms of materials control and preventive maintenance of hotels and restaurants in Ilocos Sur are “very good (4.11). The over-all rating of 4.11, described as “very good,” imply that facilities, equipment and tools of hotels and restaurants in Ilocos Sur are properly maintained and are operated within a budget.

Losses, damages and equipment breakdown are properly reported, documented and accounted for, given appropriate action, is a standard rated “outstanding.” The other standards rated “very good” were: There is a designated budget for supplies and materials; Consumption of supplies is always monitored and excessive consumption is determined and reported; Par stock requirements are always maintained, requisitions are regularly made; All equipment and tools are stored properly in appropriate storage compartments right after use; Chemicals are diluted properly and used sparingly; All appliances and equipment are regularly checked for any damage and maintained in safe working conditions to avoid accidents; Regular cleaning and check up of equipment are undertaken; Staff are trained on the proper use and maintenance of equipment; Effective control measures are designed and enforced to prevent losses and pilferages; There is regular inventory of supplies and materials; and Supplies and materials are consumed within the limits of the budget.

### **Summary on the Housekeeping Standards**

In summary, housekeeping standards of hotels and restaurants were rated as “very good” as indicated by the rating mean of 4.13. Of the six categories of housekeeping standards presented, “cleanliness got the highest rating mean of 4.26 and was described “outstanding,” followed by “orderliness” with a rating mean of 4.14 and was described “very good.”

**Table 2: Summary Table on the Housekeeping Standards of Hotels and Restaurants in Ilocos Sur**

Housekeeping Standards	Managers/Supervisors (N=40)	Attendants (N=100)	Mean	Descriptive Rating
Cleanliness	4.24	4.27	4.26	Outstanding
Orderliness	4.22	4.10	4.14	Very good
Sanitation and safety	4.16	4.01	4.06	Very Good
Facilities and equipment	4.21	4.02	4.08	Very Good
Guest Relations	4.20	4.02	4.11	Very Good
Materials Control and preventive maintenance	4.06	4.06	4.11	Very Good
General Mean	4.18	4.08	4.13	Very Good

### Problems Encountered by the Housekeeping Department

Lack of housekeeping facilities, equipment and tools" ranked number 1 among the problems identified and was the only problem described as "serious." Limited functional policies; lack of motivation on the part of the staff, low salaries, limited set of standards of performance, untrained staff and lack of personnel, and inadequate supplies were all described as "slightly serious."

### CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that hotels and restaurants in Ilocos Sur are clean, safe and secure, comfortable place to stay away from home although lacking in terms of modern and sophisticated equipment and facilities like internet connections, Wi-Fi, etc. These are effectively and efficiently managed and are contributing much to the growth of tourism in the province. As required for hospitality and tourism facilities in the country, hotels and restaurants in Ilocos Sur strictly subscribe to standards set by laws and organizations on housekeeping management and practices.

For further enhancements of hospitality services in the area, the provincial government of Ilocos Sur must encourage investors like corporations to establish bigger lodging and foodservice facilities in the province to cater to the standards of international tourists frequenting the "Heritage City of the World." Hotels must recruit appropriately trained workforce by giving priority to graduates of the Bachelor of Hotel and Restaurant Management course. A program of orientation of new recruits and re-orientation of employees and training and re-training on first-aid, safety and environmental awareness must be built-in on the housekeeping management programs of hotels and restaurants. Hotels must continue to upgrade and update their facilities to cope with the demand of the fast changing technologies.

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